4 December 1966

Mr. Lawrence Schiller
Mr. Richard Warren Lewis
Capital Records
1290 Avenue of the Americas
New York, N.Y.

Gentlemen:

I have considered carefully the implications of signing the Release forms for participation in your documentary album on the assassination and the Warren Report and have reached a decision not to be associated with your enterprise.

The primary reasons for my decision are (1) I do not believe it possible to make a meaningful presentation of the critics' case against the Warren Report in the time available on one-half of one side of a long-playing record; and (2) I cannot agree to participate in a production in which I will have no control and no veto rights over the use of my recorded statements nor over the presentation of the critics' case as a whole, in terms of its coherence, effectiveness, and objectivity.

While those constitute my main reasons, there are some secondary considerations which have influenced my decision. In our two telephone conversations and subsequent four-hour interview at my apartment, there has been a progressive escalation of the obligations imposed upon me, and as the details of the project became increasingly explicit, a progressive diminution in my hope that this was a worth-while enterprise which justified the expenditure of my time and which posed no risk to my reputation. The initial proposal was that I should make myself available for two days to have my "brain picked." On the assumption that you wanted advice and information about the factual evidence, and without thought or discussion of fee, I agreed to assist you, in the same way that I have assisted others who approached me to check manuscripts for accuracy or to provide the findings of my research, or even to commission unpaid articles and book reviews.

On the second telephone conversation, I learned that there would be a payment of $200 for my time. In your subsequent letter of November 27, 1966, I learned that I had to sign a letter of agreement to an "interview and cooperation." During your personal visit, I learned further that I had to sign a detailed legalistic "Release" yielding various rights and absolute rights—over photographs as well as my recorded voice—to Capitol Records and to an unknown corporation Alskog, Inc. Those rights include "blurring, distortion, alteration, or optical illusion." I cannot assign to anyone the right to distort or alter my statements.

Had I been advised in the first instance of these burgeoning conditions and demands, I should have given you a negative answer at once, thus obviating the expenditure of four hours of your time and my own.

For two years the critics of the Warren Report met a stone wall of deafness and indifference. Now, suddenly, a great many commercial branches of the public media are making insistent demands for interviews, articles, lectures, and the like. I would like to think that this sudden eruption of interest reflects a desire for justice and a commitment to the truth; but it would be naive not to realize that in some instances, if not most cases, the motivation has nothing to do with principle and everything to do with profit--profit from a subject which is suddenly "hot."

At first blush, the commitment by Capitol Records to pay the royalties to the Kennedy Library suggests altruism and public service. But it appears on closer examination that it is the "artists"--that is, those who agree to the use of their voices and photographs in the album--who will assume the burden of this altruism and public service. I see no commitment by Capitol records to abjure any part of its normal profits on production, distribution, and sale of this disc. Now charity supposedly begins at home; and I see no reason why I should give Capitol Records the right to decide that my royalties should go to a cause of their choosing, while the Corporation and presumably the directors, editors, technicians, etc., pocket the usual salaries, fees, and profits.

Should the album sell well or extraordinarily well, the 5% pro rata royalties may come to a substantial amount of money, perhaps to thousands of dollars. I am not inclined to relinquish such a sum to the Kennedy Library, the main sponsors of which have obstructed, denounced and disassociated themselves from the very critics who would be making this magnanimous financial contribution to their cause. I would prefer to see the money go for a purpose which would advance research by the critics, since I believe that the greatest tribute to the dead President would be to discover and expose those who murdered him; and I do not consent to contribute, directly or indirectly, to memorials dear to the critics' adversaries.

In the light of all of these considerations, I find myself unable to agree to participation in your album and I hereby request you not to make any commercial or other use of my recorded voice or my photographs. I am sending a copy of this letter to my attorney for the record.

Yours sincerely,

Sylvia Meagher
302 West 12 Street
New York, N.Y. 10014